

The Request and Need for Operational Management Information  
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The budget implications of flat undergraduate enrollment has administrators asking about trying to boost graduate enrollment. This is an excellent question, but one which UH is surprisingly poorly equipped to answer. Discussing the issue is a great way to illustrate why we need a serious overhaul of our data management system, so that UH becomes able to generate operational management information on a par with its ability to issue financial management information. Professional enrollment management is a separate issue from graduate students, and deserves its own discussion. We thus will concentrate on the Masters degree offered by virtually all UH departments, plus the Ph.D. degree offered by about 20 departments.

Graduate enrollment is the most information intensive question on campus, because graduate students vary so widely. Virtually all Ph.D. students start their graduate educational careers as Masters students. Some fields offer Masters degrees as a terminal degree, whereas in other fields it is merely considered a consolation prize for students who do not complete their Ph.D. work. Further, the Ph.D. is not necessarily a terminal degree in many fields, especially sciences, in which post-doctoral work is a virtual necessity before obtaining a faculty appointment.

Another complication for graduate students is that they have a broad array of funding impacts. For example, the state funding for graduate students is a multiple of that offered for undergraduates, about three times for Masters students and 9 or more times for Ph.D. students. Clearly for Ph.D. students, the sooner they stop being considered Masters students the better for state funding. Thus, there are many state rules determining when a student is considered a Masters or Ph.D. student, including caps on the length of time a student can be a Ph.D. candidate.

State budget rules, however, are only the beginning of the complications for understanding the financial implications. In many fields, graduate students receive stipends from the university. The annual average stipend varies greatly across fields, from quite modest in some humanities fields to quite substantial in some sciences. The funding source for the stipends also varies greatly. Some graduate students receive stipends (fellowships) for which there are no work requirements. The same graduate student may be later funded from outside grant dollars so they can participate in a research project as part of their training, which generally involves them being considered employees of the University. The same graduate student may still later teach a section of an introductory course to obtain needed classroom experience. The student would then be considered a teaching fellow and classified still differently. Thus the same graduate student can be funded through a variety of sources during their educational careers, and graduate students even in the same department may be classified under widely varying schemes.

This discussion only begins to explain the complicated budgetary implications of graduate students. Another impact is on the number and variety of course offerings their teaching enables. Understanding the direct budgetary impact is further incomplete because of the indirect effects on faculty, who view graduate students as interesting to train, and as

important for research support. One certainty about graduate students is that they are central to the academic life of a research institution. To plan for any expansion, however, certainly requires a plan to expand both faculty size and office and lab space as well as additional stipends. Thus the financial implications are crucial to being able to obtain these resources, which requires that UH understand the financial implications. Therefore the Senate has asked the administration to provide a list by department of total funding for graduate students from all sources. To date, the UH financial systems are unable to answer this question. The path to Tier One, however, seems to clearly go right through such a question, and we need to develop the financial systems to answer it.